

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH EGYPT AND ISRAEL

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A SERMON
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*“And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:
but made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.”*
Psalm 78:51-52

THERE is a very sharp line of division here between the Egyptians and the Lord's own people, and that line of division always has existed and always will, for all attempts to blend the seed of the serpent with the seed of the woman must fail. Between the church and the world, however debased the church may become, and however reformed the world may be, there will still be a clear distinction even until the end—and that distinction will be seen in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, when “before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”

At the present moment, in this congregation, though no human eye can read all our characters, there is a clear division amongst us who are here. If some infallible “teller” could now divide the house into Ayes and Noes, separating those who are on God's side from those who are not, the spectacle would be a very striking one.

I pray that each one's own conscience may, at least in some measure, make that division and that we may all think within ourselves whether we fear the God of Israel or do not fear Him—whether we are for Him or against Him—for rest you well assured that as God dealt with Egypt of old, so will He deal with all His adversaries. And as He dealt with Israel of old, so will He deal with all His own people.

The “parable” (for that is the expression with which the Psalm begins) will be written out again in history, and be repeated, enlarged, and intensified throughout eternity. God has made an everlasting distinction between those who fear Him and those who fear Him not—and that distinction will be seen in His dealings with the children of men.

I want you, first, to spend a few minutes in solemnly and sadly thinking of *the punishment of Egypt*. And then we will more joyfully meditate upon *the salvation of Israel*.

I. First, let us think of THE PUNISHMENT OF EGYPT.

Egypt, through its kings, had become the determined adversary of God. “Who is JEHOVAH, that I should obey his voice?” was the challenge flung down by Pharaoh in defiance. And the Lord, who is a man of war, was not slow to accept it. Then came that great conflict between the stony-hearted king and JEHOVAH the God of Israel.

To all but the eye of faith, it did seem a very hopeless thing to expect that Israel should ever come forth out of Egypt. They had been so long oppressed and down-trodden that they were really only a vast herd of slaves—they had not the spirit of free men. And when Moses was sent by God to lead them out of the house of bondage, they were rather a hindrance to their deliverer than a help to him.

They were a poor race of serfs crushed beneath Pharaoh's iron heel, yet JEHOVAH was their God and they were His people. They might be grimy with their labors at the brick kiln, they might sweat in the iron furnace, but God was on their side and He owned them as His people. Notwithstanding their

degradation and their sorrow, He heard their cry and He came down to deliver them—and then it became a battle royal between JEHOVAH of hosts and proud Pharaoh of Egypt.

God determined to strike blow after blow, to deal more gently with the tyrant at the first than He did at the last, and to end the battle by letting all men see that potsherds cannot strive successfully against a rod of iron, and that puny man, at his strongest, is as nothing before the might of his Maker. God caused all the firstborn of Egypt to die on one night, and so delivered His people with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Let us learn from this, that when God comes to try conclusions between Himself and His enemies, He may allow a certain time to elapse before He overthrows them, He may for awhile smite gently, and so give opportunities for repentance. But if they be not accepted, we may depend upon it that God is not playing with sinners. They may fancy that He is, and they may delight to listen to those dulcet voices, those velvet-lined mouths that preach, nowadays, soft things to sinners who stand out in enmity against God—but they will find that they have been deceived when God comes to close quarters with them—and they will curse the man who has deceived them and made them continue to resist the Most High to their eternal ruin.

For, when He once lays hold of the sword and buckler, His own words are, “I will ease me of mine adversaries.” And we may rest assured that when He comes forth to execute judgment, He will do it as thoroughly as He did when He “smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham.”

I can imagine Pharaoh dreaming that he had defeated JEHOVAH. Possibly he said to his courtiers, “I have not seen that man Moses for the last four days. Certainly, he has plagued this country enough, but he has played his last card now—we shall never hear of him anymore. I have stood out and I have won the day—let us have a great feast unto our gods, for, after all, we have triumphed.”

They spread the tables and they brought out the goblets, and the impious king drank on till far into the night. But what was that cry that made him start? What are those thousands of cries all through the palace and all around it? Pharaoh's eldest son has fallen dead in a moment. He had had him crowned a little while before and associated him with himself in the government of the kingdom—but there he lies, smitten dead in his father's presence and before all the nobles of the land.

All in the court who were firstborn sons perished there in the king's sight. And when he went out into the open air, that he might cool his fevered brow, he heard those awful cries from all the houses of the Egyptians, for there was not a house in the land in which there was not one dead. What think you now, proud king? Can you stand against this unseen power? God has smitten you now even to the heart and broken your proud spirit in pieces.

We may all rest assured that God has ways of punishing us if we continue in rebellion against Him. We may live a long life and never think of Him. We may live a blasphemous life and defy Him. And He may for a time afflict us as He plagued Pharaoh with the flies and the locusts, and the milder judgments—but He will deal with our souls in sterner fashion in the next world when He comes to mete out vengeance without mercy, because His grace was utterly despised by us. David said, “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.” So He will and He will know how to smite us in the most tender place if we still continue to resist Him.

In the case of Pharaoh, it was his own chickens that came home to roost—*his sins brought their own punishment*. He had slain many of the children of Israel and God had, in effect, said to Him, “Israel is my firstborn; let my people go.” And as he would not let God's firstborn go, God's stroke of judgment came upon his firstborn.

This is, perhaps, the most dreadful truth about future retribution—that a man will see his own sin in his suffering just as he sees his face in a glass. Hell is sin fully developed—a man's own soul permitted to go to extreme limits with that which it now carries out in a mitigated form—and so, becoming like a furnace heated seven times hotter than usual, tormenting itself beyond all power of imagination.

I do not know anything more awful to one's own self than to know that one has done wrong. When conscience is aroused, then you can go to Jesus and be washed from the stains of guilt—and how sweet is that sense of perfect cleansing! But that conscience will still remain to accuse those for whom there will be no washing. That sense of sin will still be present, only a hundred times more vividly, but there will be no bath that can take away the sin.

We shall continue to feel the guilt of our transgressions, but we shall not be able to find the sugar on the pill which tempted us when we were here, and we shall have to let it lie like a burning fire within our spirit, forever seeing our own sin, the sin of our whole life, all that we did, and said, and thought, coming home to us, just as Pharaoh's evil conduct came home to him.

I do not like speaking upon these horrible themes and I would not mention them if they were not true—and if men could be roused to escape from sin by more tender topics—but their ears are dull of hearing, so they need the trumpet to sound an alarm. And the watchman is bound to give warning in the time of danger, for it is written, "If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people are not warned; if the sword come, and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

Remember also, dear friends, that *there was no escape from that judgment of God upon Egypt*. The Israelites were sheltered under the sprinkled blood of the paschal lamb and not one of them was harmed. But Egypt's lintels and doorposts had no sprinkling of the blood upon the bunch of hyssop, and therefore not one firstborn son in their houses escaped.

Nor was there *any possibility of recovery from that blow*. They could not restore to life one of those who fell by the mysterious stroke of the avenging angel who flew so swiftly through the land. And when God deals with men in judgment, none of them shall be able to escape. If they could go to the top of Carmel, He would find them out there. If they should plunge into the depths of the sea, even there would He give commandment to the crooked serpent—and they should be punished for their sin.

If they should borrow the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth, His warrant officers would be there first, waiting to arrest the fugitives. There is no escape from God's judgment and no recovery from His blows. Let God kill the firstborn in Egypt and they are killed. Let God condemn the ungodly and they are condemned. Let God curse them, and they are indeed cursed. What the curse of God must mean, may you and I, my dear hearers, never know!

I want to turn away from this sad part of my subject, but before I do, I must ask each one of you this question—Are you an enemy of the God of Israel? If so, you can see, in the punishment of Egypt, how He will deal with you. You cannot be victorious in this fight, so yield at once. Possibly you say, "No, I am not an enemy of God, yet I never think of Him."

But He made you, He breathed into you the breath of life, and yet you say that you never think of Him! What a shameful slight you thus put upon His person, His majesty! He is here just close to you at this moment, He surrounds your every step with mercy, and yet you never think of Him! Shall I give you one of His own messages to remember? It is a very dreadful one—"Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." May none of you ever come to know what that terrible verse means!

I am glad that it is not the duty of the preacher to look into the future and to see even one of you perishing in sin. I could not bear to turn my eyes that way, nor even to think of it as possible. Escape, I pray you, while you can escape. Flee from the wrath to come. Lay hold on eternal life. The door of God's mercy is open at present and whosoever believes in Jesus Christ passes in through that door.

In fact, He is the door, as He said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Oh, that you may come unto God by Him, and that there may be peace between you and God henceforth and forever!

II. Now I will leave that sorrowful part of my theme, for I want to speak about God's own people while we think of THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL.

The second verse of our text runs thus—"He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock."

I might say a great deal about how they came to be His people—by His eternal choice and sovereign grace—but I am not going into the doctrinal side of the subject so much as the practical. Let me say, then, that *God has His people to this day*—He has a people in this world now, who are as distinctly His as the Jews were, and who are even more separated from the rest of mankind than the children of Israel were from the heathen nations by whom they were surrounded. The all-important question for each one of you is—Do you belong to the Lord's people?

I will tell you what is their distinguishing mark—they are those who have faith. Abraham is the father of the faithful. He believed God and all those who rely upon God as Abraham did are Abraham's spiritual seed—and the Lord is their God. He chose them, but they have also chosen Him. They can truly say, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

Now, can we who are here say that we believe in the invisible God and that we are trying to worship Him in that simple way which He prefers? We do not invent gaudy ceremonies, nor anything that springs of will-worship—but we remember that our Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

This is the special and distinctive mark of the child of God, that whereas another man takes into his calculation only as much as he can see, or hear, or touch—this man bases his chief calculation upon God whom he cannot see and whose voice he never heard with his ears—and he lives as seeing Him who is invisible, trusting in Him whom, not having seen, He loves.

I ask you, dear friends, is that your character? Have you been brought to trust in Jesus Christ's blood for the pardon and cleansing of all your sin, and now is your life a life of faith upon the Son of God? "The just shall live by faith" and that faith is the mark of God's people in the world—they have faith in Him while others have not.

Many men believe in themselves. They boast of being self-made men. It is as well that they did make themselves in that sense, for they are no credit to anybody else. Some people have placed their reliance upon others. In their exercise of faith they go no further than friends whom they can see. Their friends, inasmuch as they rely upon them, and not upon God, practically become their gods. Whatever a man depends upon, whatever rules his mind, whatever governs his affections, whatever is the chief object of his delight—is his god. So we can all judge whether JEHOVAH is our God or not.

Do we realize His presence and power? Do we know that there is such a God? Do we love Him? Do we delight ourselves in Him? Can we truly say that the greatest joy we ever have is that there is such a God and that He is ours, and we are His? The ungodly man, who thereby proves that he is a fool, says in his heart, "There is no God." He wishes there were none, but to the child of God, it would be the greatest loss that he could sustain if he were to lose his God.

He delights himself in God. God is his exceeding joy. He is, indeed, his all. This is the mark of the people of God and God has such a people scattered up and down in all churches and throughout the entire world—and those are the people with whom He will deal as He dealt with Israel of old—"He made his own people to go forth like sheep."

That leads us to our second point, which is that *God brings these people out from among all others*. He brought Israel up out of Egypt, and if you are one of His people, He will fetch you out of the world. You may live for years in the world, as the Israelites lived in Goshen, and you may say to yourself, "I do not want a better heritage than this."

But if you are one of the Lord's own, He will turn that Goshen of yours into a place of bondage until you sigh, and cry, and long to be delivered from it. God did not drive His people out of Egypt, but He led them—they came willingly and gladly, for Egypt had become a place of misery to them. So does the world become, with all its sinful pleasures. Its fine glories turn to emptiness and vanity to the true child of God and God fetches him out of it all.

I have been astonished, sometimes, at the way in which God does fetch out His people. Some of them get as far into the enemy's country as ever they can, but He brings them out. Some have gone into drunkenness, others into blasphemy, some even into what they call Free Thought—which is a state of sad bondage to the soul—and they have thought that there they would never be reached by God's mercy, yet He has tracked them out, brought them back to Himself with weeping and supplication, and made them loathe the place and the company that they once loved.

When that prodigal son went away from home, with his purse full of gold and silver, it did not look as though he would ever go back to his father. See him there, in the far country, wasting his substance with riotous living. What vile company he frequented! There was nothing filthy but he delighted in it—and so it came to pass that, in process of time, a citizen of that country sent him into his fields to feed swine.

The prodigal had neither swine nor fields of his own. He had been living at such a rate that he had spent all that he had. Yet he did come back to his home, for he was his father's own child—he was obliged to go back or to starve. It is a good thing for prodigals to be brought to extremities.

Some time ago I met with a young man, the son of a very godly father, and I was grieved to hear him ridicule religion and ridicule it very bitterly, too. In the course of our conversation, he said that he was keeping racehorses, and I said to him, "Keep as many as ever you can, for there is no hope of your ever coming back to God till you have spent all that you have, so spend it as fast as you can. Get down to the swine trough, and when you are ready to fill your belly with the husks, I daresay you will want to come back."

He said that I was very sarcastic, but I told him that I was in solemn earnest and that I thought that was the usual way in which profligates went. When they have spent all, there arises a mighty famine in the land—and when they begin to be in want, they come back. But why should any of you need God to use such rough methods of fetching you back to Him? Go home at once, poor wandering child, to the great God who waits to welcome you. Oh, that His Spirit may constrain you even now!

So we see that God still has a people in the world and that He will fetch out those people of His from the rest of mankind. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, He will bring them out, even as He brought Israel out of Egypt.

Notice, next, that the Lord not only brings His people away from others, but *He brings them to Himself*—"He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock." He Himself going before them through the desert way like a shepherd. Oh, that God would, this very hour, bring out of the world and unto Himself some of those whom He has chosen, for that is the soul's true place—following God as the sheep follow the shepherd.

Where can any soul be so much at home as with the God who made it? Where is a son ever so completely in his right place as when he is at his father's table? Where can my poor heart ever hope to find rest but on the bosom of my God? Oh, that the Lord would, in His infinite mercy, bring any wanderers who are here to Himself! The way to God must always be through Jesus Christ—He Himself said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." O poor wandering souls, come to God through Jesus Christ His Son, follow where He leads and walk ever in His way!

Further, in bringing sinners to Himself, *God will also bring them to one another*. "He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock." He does not say that they should be like a solitary dog that comes at his master's whistle, but like a flock of sheep that move together in one direction.

One mark of the children of God is that they love one another and that they associate with each other. Why have we been guided to form churches and other Christian communities? It is because we are gregarious creatures, and need mutual sympathy and companionship. Christ's sheep are not like ravening wolves that hunt in pairs, or singly, but they delight in company.

There are some professing Christians who seem as if they could get on best by themselves, but I think that the most of us are never so happy as when we are enjoying fellowship with those who love the same Savior whom we love. We say, concerning the place where we meet with the saints,—

*“There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”*

There is no society for you young people who have been lately converted like the church of Jesus Christ. So seek admission into it—join with the rest of your brothers and sisters in Christ and make your home with them. I think that you hardly give evidence of being God's child if you go in and out of His house, and never speak to anybody there, and never own anyone as a brother or sister in the Lord. Where the Father is love, the Spirit is love, and the elder Brother is love, love should rule in all the household.

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” It is one of the marks of God's people that they love each other. He leads them forth like a flock of sheep, He brings them into union with one another. Gives them happy fellowship in His church and so guides them to heaven.

That is our last point—the Lord brings His people out from the world, and brings them to Himself, and to fellowship with one another—and then *He guides them to a place of rest*, even as He led Israel into Canaan. The Lord is gently leading all believers onward towards their blessed resting place above. You are not going down into Egypt, brother, like poor old Jacob went with the wagons in the olden time—you are going up to Canaan. You shall be fed all through the desert—the manna shall fall all round your tent every morning, the water from the smitten rock shall flow close to you through all your wanderings—and your Lord Himself has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Your hair is whitening, you lean heavily upon your staff, you have not many more years of pilgrimage left, but to the end of your wilderness journey, your feet shall not swell, neither shall your garments wax old upon you—still shall your shoes be iron and brass, and as your days, so shall your strength be. JEHOVAH never yet forsook any soul that trusted Him.

Some of us can bear witness to His faithfulness—not for so many years as others of you have seen—but some of us can talk of thirty years' experience of a faithful God. And though we have forgotten Him and grieved Him, He has never once broken any promise that He has made. Oh, the deliverances we have had, the merciful interpositions of His gracious hand on our behalf!

He is a good God, a blessed God. His praises we can never fully sing. The service of God is felicity below as it is eternal bliss above. If I knew that I would die like a dog, if it could be proved to me that my faith would all turn out to be a delusion, I should like, somehow, never to be free from the delusion. It is so blessed a thing to serve God, even in this life, He gives us such joy and peace that, though many are the afflictions of the righteous, yet His service is perfect freedom—and to honor Him is our supreme delight. Blessed be His holy name!

Then comes the end, the passage of the river Jordan and the entrance into the promised inheritance. Perhaps you are asking, “How shall I ever cross that river to enter into the portion that God has marked out for me by line and lot?” Do not be afraid. Many timorous saints go over that long-dreaded stream dry-shod—they never know that they are dying.

How many fall asleep on earth and open their eyes in heaven! I can fancy them almost thinking, “Am I really in eternity?” Yet the soul will never need to ask that question when once it has entered the pearly gates.

*“O blissful hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near, and like my God.”*

An ethereal joy, such as I never knew to the full before, shall fill my spirit when once I am absent from the body, present with the Lord. Do not be afraid to die, beloved, but rather look at death as an experience to be desired. I have not the slightest wish to escape it. Those who live till Christ comes and

do not die will have no preference over them that fall asleep in Him. Indeed, they will lose the fellowship with Him, in His death and burial, that others will have.

I like that verse which I have often quoted,—

*“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay;
To die in the Lord, is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory thro’ death led the way.”*

Yes, brethren, our great Joshua will assuredly bring us into the promised land, Jordan or no Jordan. We shall have our lot and our inheritance beyond the river, that is, if we truly trust in Him.

How about that matter? Are you resting in Jesus Christ the one Mediator between God and men? Have you faith in the living God? A living people must have a living God. Oh, if your money is your god, if your belly is your god, if this world is your god, if Satan is your god, you will have Egypt’s doom.

But if, through Christ Jesus the Lord, God is your one hope, and joy, and confidence, then be not afraid, for He will lead you through the wilderness, and He will bring you into your eternal rest. God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 37

It may be, beloved friends, that there is a word of comfort for some of you in this “Psalm of David.” If any of you have been perplexed and worried, and there has been a stern conflict within your spirit, here are some cheering words which will bring a message from God to you.

It may be worth your while to remember that the 37th Psalm and the 73rd are upon the same subject. They are the same figures reversed, but they both deal with the great mystery which has vexed the hearts of godly men in all generations.

Verses 1-2. *Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

What a contrast there is between the grass before the mower comes with his scythe, and that same grass when it is cut down. And there is the same kind of difference between the glory of ungodly men at one moment and their destruction the next. How beautiful the fertile mead appears before you mow its many-colored flowers, yet in how short a time all its beauties are cut down and withered in the sun!

3-4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

The psalmist begins with, “Fret not yourself...neither be thou envious,” but he advances to something higher. He seeks to lead his hearer or reader up to “trust in the LORD,” and then still further up to, “delight in the LORD.” A Christian should constantly be on the rising scale—though he is ever in the way of change, it should be a change for the better. Take care, dear friends, that you are people of simple trust—“Trust in the LORD”—and then you shall advance to delight in Him. “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

5-6. *Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

It may be very dark with you just now, but God will turn your midnight into noonday. It is only He who can do it, therefore be sure to commit your way unto Him—“trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”

7. *Rest in the LORD,*

Not only rest on Him, but rest in Him—get into such close fellowship with Him that you really “rest in the LORD.”

7-8. *And wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*

It is fretting that leads to anger and all manner of evil, but when the heart truly rests in God, it forsakes wrath. When we get away from resting in the Lord, we soon drift out upon a very stormy sea, where our poor little barques are not able to hold their own. Therefore is it most needful for us to obey the injunction, “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.”

9-10. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

The very house he inhabited, the grand estate which he called his own, shall be called by the name of another owner, and he shall be blotted out of remembrance.

11-15. *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.*

They were so eager “to cast down the poor and needy” that they used both sword and bow against them, yet they could not succeed in their evil designs, for God took care of His own people, and therefore the psalmist was able to say concerning their enemies, “Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.”

16. *A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.*

“Many wicked.” That is a strong expression. The psalmist does not merely mention the riches of one wicked man, but he says, “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.”

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.*

He keeps on upholding them. He holds them up, and in another sense, He lifts them up on high and holds them up near to Himself in the glorious sunshine of fellowship with Him.

18. *The LORD knoweth the days of the upright:*

He is well-acquainted with their bright days and their dark days. He keeps a diary of all their ever-changing experiences. “The LORD knoweth the days of the upright:”

18. *And their inheritance shall be for ever.*

There is an entail upon covenant blessings which ensures their enjoyment by all the chosen seed—and they shall never be taken from them. “Their inheritance shall be for ever.”

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

They shall not only get, as we say, “a sup and a bite,” but “they shall be satisfied.” And that even “in the days of famine,” when other people starve. They are well-fed whom God feeds. There is no table like the one furnished and supplied by Omnipotence. He who is infinite in resources can readily supply all our necessities.

20-21. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.*

He prefers to do that rather than to lend—it generally comes to the same thing in the long run and he may as well know from the first what he is really doing. “The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.”

22-23. *For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

What a beautiful expression that is, “the steps of a good man”—the very *steps*, the little things, the daily actions, the ordinary progress of a good man—“The steps of a good man are ordered by the

LORD: and he delighteth in his way.” Our way is sometimes rough, but if God takes a delight in it, it must be right. It is a joy to us to know that the lives of godly men are delightful to the Most High.

24. *Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*

There may be a stumble, or even a fall, and he will grieve over it. He may suffer great losses and he may think that there is an end to his mercies, but it shall not be so. God's servants are like the sheep—they may fall many times, but they are soon up again. Hypocrites are like the swine—when they fall, they wallow in the mire, which is their congenial element.

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

David had not seen the seed of the righteous begging bread, but we have often seen it. For, when the seed of the righteous do not behave themselves aright, they have to suffer poverty as well as other people. But under the old covenant, David could truly say that he had not seen this grievous sight.

Yet many of us could go as far as David did in the first part of the verse—“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.” No, that shall never be the case and it is a very singular circumstance, which they who have to distribute charity have often noticed—how seldom, comparatively, do they find godly people very greatly reduced. Somehow or other, God provides for them.

The trouble we have with our Orphanages is to find the orphans of godly men and women, for they are very few compared with those of other people. You may look over any list you like and you shall find that very seldom are the saints reduced to absolute poverty. Yet, when poverty does come, and it does come to some of the very best of men and women, then God blesses it to them and bears them up beneath it, so that they do not really lack any good thing. As for the gracious man,—

26-37. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*

When you come to sum up the whole of his life, the total of it amounts to this—“peace.” After all his varied experiences, God did give him rest, and with all the turmoil and tossing which came upon him occasionally, still he was a man to be envied. It is the end to which we must always look, after all—and concerning the perfect and upright man the psalmist says, “the end of that man is peace.”

38-39. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD:*

It is not the result of their own goodness or merit—but it is wholly “of the LORD.” Righteous men are saved men because the Lord saves them by His grace and that is where they put their confidence.

39. *He is their strength in the time of trouble.*

Dwell on that sweet short sentence. Not only does the Lord give them strength, but He Himself “is their strength in the time of trouble.” He is so near to His people that all the omnipotence of His Godhead is theirs.

Are you in trouble just now, dear child of God? Well, you have strength enough to carry you through it all if this be true, as it is—“He is their strength in the time of trouble.” If God Himself is your strength, do not talk about being weak. Of course you are weakness itself apart from Him—do not expect to be anything other than that—but then remember the psalmist's declaration, “He is their strength in the time of trouble.”

40. *And the LORD shall help them,—*

Do you need anything more than this great promise? You have a heavy load to carry, but it is nothing to Him who is omnipotent. “The LORD shall help them,”

40. *And deliver them:*

He shall help them while they are in the trouble and bring them out of it in due time.

40. *He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.*

O dear friends, lean hard upon God! Lay down all your burdens at your Savior's feet, and rest there in holy and happy confidence in Him. May the Lord give to all of us the grace to enjoy this sweet rest, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136, 114, 885, 846

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.